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Written statement* submitted by The Palestinian Return Centre Ltd, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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The Legal Status of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

Although Palestinian refugees have been living in Lebanon for more than 70 years, the Lebanese government has not yet provided a legal definition that determines their rights and duties but only issuing personal cards to them from the Ministry of Interior and these cards are not in accordance with international standards and are easy to damage and falsify. Despite the existence of documents proving their ancestry there are hundreds of refugees currently facing registration obstacles in the Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees.

1. Although Lebanon amended the Labor Law (129/2010)[1] and the Social Security Law (128/2010)[2], no executive decrees were issued for this law and it remains subject to the arbitrary decision of the Ministers of Labor. Palestinian refugees continue to face restrictions imposed when entering the labor market, as well as being barred from working in several professions such as medicine, law, engineering and pharmacy.

2. Lebanon imposes restrictions that deprive Palestinian refugees from living in adequate housing and in a healthy environment by living in overcrowded camps; the size of refugee camps has not changed since their inception in 1950, despite the increase of refugees. Other restrictions have compounded this crisis by preventing refugees from owning real estate after 2001[3], as well as imposing strict restrictions on the introduction of building materials into those camps for house repairs.

3. Lebanon imposes restrictions on the right of movement of Palestinian refugees to and from certain camps because of the tight security procedures, which force them to wait for long periods of time, which impedes their access to their places of work, as well as placing walls and barbed wire around most camps which transforms them into large prisons and isolation centers.[4]

4. The Lebanese state continues to discriminate against a Palestinian refugee woman married to a Lebanese man, as placing restrictions on the acquisition of Lebanese nationality by Palestinian women despite her marriage if she did not have children. Lebanese women married to a Palestinian are also prevented from granting their nationality to their children.[5]

5. The Lebanese state denies Palestinian refugees who reside in Lebanon the right to establish associations and organizations.[6] Palestinians must register organisations through a person that has a Lebanese ID.

6. The Lebanese state has not recognized the legal status of Palestinian refugees from Syria to Lebanon, and deal with them as tourists. As such, Palestinians have to pay the fees of entry and residence and in many cases they may even face prosecution and deportation.

7. The Lebanese state also discriminates against Palestinian refugee women from Syria married to a Palestinian refugee from Lebanon, in which case women are required to obtain residence and pay fees annually.[7]

Recommendations

- The Lebanese state must pass a law that defines the Palestinian refugee in Lebanon as a clear and unambiguous legal definition guaranteeing civil, economic and social rights and the ability to live in dignity.

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1 Legal Informatics Center - Lebanese University, Labor Law, Article 59 (amended under 129/2010), http://www.legallaw.ul.edu.lb/LawArticles.aspx?LawArticleID=775897&LawId=190374

2 Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, Law No. 128, https://goo.gl/kr7EFF

3 Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, https://goo.gl/aKFbH9

4 Al Jazeera Blogs, https://goo.gl/4UK4uj

5Legal Informatics Center - Lebanese University, Law amending and adding articles on Resolution No. 15 dated 19-1-1925 concerning Lebanese nationality, http://www.legallaw.ul.edu.lb/LawView.aspx?opt=view&LawID=181437

6 Lebanese Parliament, https://goo.gl/aGDVxA

7 Action Group for Palestinians of Syria, https://goo.gl/5zHRtS

- Lebanon should abide to international conventions and lift the reservation on Article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the amendment of all relevant laws.

- Recognition of the legal status of Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon as refugees and not tourists.

- The Lebanese state should acknowledge the status of Palestinian refugee women married to Lebanese and cease the procedures that obstruct the right to acquire Lebanese nationality.

- Replace security measures from the camp perimeter with other measures in accordance with international standards that do not infringe the human rights of Palestinians.

- The Lebanese state should fulfill its duties in terms of developing a plan that would ensure the right to adequate housing within the camps.

- The Lebanese state should lift restrictions on imports of building materials and supplies, within the framework of pre-established criteria for Palestinian refugee camps to maintain, rebuild and rehabilitate houses and infrastructure.

- Stop compounding the discrimination against Palestinian refugees and issue a legal amendment allowing them to own property.

- Stop arbitrary measures, which prohibit the registration of property acquired before the amendment of Law 296/2001 and impede the transfer of Inheritance Real Estate property.

- Stop discriminatory measures and complications that impede the registration of a foreigner's property married to a Palestinian refugee.

- Amend Law 129/2010 to abolish work permits and grant Palestinian refugees the to work and practicing regular jobs and issue the necessary practical decrees.

- Amend Law 128/2010 to allow Palestinian working refugees to enjoy their full rights in social security, in particular to ensure maternity benefits for Palestinian refugees and to issue the necessary implementing decrees.